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SP Dear Ms. Soltani:

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This is in response to the recent letter that you, Danny Kennedy and Christopher Hatch sent to President Clinton expressing concern regarding the U'Wa indigenous group's dispute with the Government of Colombia over land issues.

The U.S. Government is closely monitoring the situation among the U'Wa indigenous group, Occidental Petroleum, and the Government of Colombia. As part of its effort to resolve the situation, the Government of Colombia, after consultations with the U'Wa, expanded the U'Wa reservation from 61,156 hectares to 220,275 hectares in August 1999. A "hectare" is equivalent to approximately 2.5 acres, so the collective lands of some five thousand U'Wa members now totals in excess of one-half million acres. The Occidental Petroleum drill site was not in the U'Wa reservation before the Colombian Government expanded the U'Wa territory and is not included in the U'Wa reservation as designated by the Colombian Government in August 1999.

In August, 2000, a technical working group that included, among others, senior members of the Ministries of Environment and Interior, as well as an advisor to the U'Wa, reported that the Government of Colombia and Occidental Petroleum were complying with all applicable regulations. However, the U'Wa broke off talks with the Government of Colombia in September.

Respect for human rights and the protection of these rights are central to U.S. policy toward Colombia. The U.S. Government is deeply concerned about violence and the abuse of human rights in Colombia. The State Department's Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1999 outlines our specific concerns regarding Colombia. We have raised these issues frequently and at every level with Colombian Government officials. Colombian President Andres Pastrana has taken important steps to address

Ms. Atossa Soltani,
 Executive Director,
 Amazon Watch,
 1155 Topanga Canyon Blvd., Suite E,
 Topanga, CA 90290.

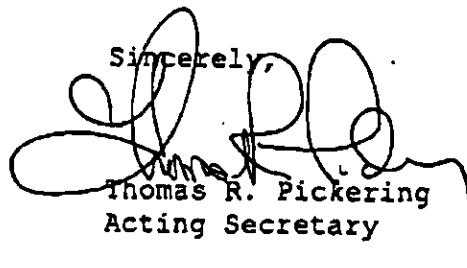
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the serious issue of human rights abuses, particularly those committed by members of the Colombian security forces. Be assured that we will continue to monitor this situation closely.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Pickering
Acting Secretary

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Drafted:WHA/AND:ALee
Searand/Andco00/Correspondence/U'Was & 3 US NGOs 12.20.00

Cleared:WHA:Bbrownfield ok
WHA/AND:Pchicola ok
DRL:CSibilla ok
S/S-CR:NLChagnon.
P:Mfitzpatrick ok

Alex
for

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